

DNREC Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police advise: Don't drink and boat on Delaware waterways

DOVER – For a safer Memorial Day holiday weekend, DNREC Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police remind boaters that drinking and boating don't mix. Boat operators who have consumed alcohol put themselves, their passengers, and other boaters in Delaware waters at risk, and boat operators found with blood alcohol levels of .08 or higher will face charges for operating under the influence (OUI) in violation of Delaware and federal laws.

Marine patrols are increased over the holiday weekend to ensure safe boating and public safety. Boat operators found at or above the legal limit will find their voyage terminated, will be arrested, and may have their vessel impounded. Anyone charged with boating under the influence also can face fines and potential jail time.

According to national statistics from the U.S. Coast Guard, alcohol use is a leading known contributing factor to fatal boating accidents. In 2017, the most recent year for which U.S. Coast Guard statistics are available, In 2017, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 275 boat accidents involved alcohol use, resulting in 102 deaths and 227 injuries nationally.

The best way to minimize the risk of an accident is to make the wiser choice – don't drink and boat. Environmental stressors aboard a boat – such as constant motion, heat, sun glare, and dehydration – all contribute to the negative effects of any amount of alcohol. Because of this, having a

non-drinking, designated boat operator is strongly recommended.

Other tips for recreational boaters to ensure a safe and enjoyable holiday weekend include:

- Make sure children 12 and younger wear life jackets while underway as required by law.
- Wear your life jacket and encourage all your passengers 13 and older to also wear them.
- Observe all “Slow No Wake” areas.
- Maintain a lookout and keep a safe distance from other vessels.
- Check navigation lights and make sure to turn them on when operating at night.
- Carry your boating education card and all required safety equipment appropriate for your size vessel.
- Canoes, kayaks, and paddle boards are considered vessels, and passengers are required to have a life jacket on board and carry a whistle or other sound-producing device. If you are out after sunset, a flashlight is also required.

For access to the online Delaware Boating Handbook and other safe boating information, visit the [Delaware Boating Safety](#) web pages, or contact Delaware Boating Safety & Education Coordinator Sgt. Brooke Mitchell at 302-739-9913 or brooke.mitchell@delaware.gov.

Media Contact: Sgt. Brooke Mitchell, Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police, 302-739-9913 or 302-382-7167, or Joanna Wilson, Public Affairs, 302-739-9902.